2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

535 764 721 177 brother had just been buried said: 'Those who are really sad sit quite still and silent.' But he was an old man with little strength for dancing; on the first day of his brother's burial he sat still, but on the second day he danced a little.

As for the women who participate in the war-dance, running about among the men and calling the war-cry, their behaviour is clearly distinguished in accordance with their relationship to the dead man. 'The distant (women) relatives dance in their dirt, they cannot adorn themselves much, but non-relatives adorn themselves. The wives and sisters of a dead man and the nearer women relatives are the chief mourners and they cannot dance at the burial. They are truly grieved. If a wife danced we'd say she did not love her husband—well, perhaps she might wander round distraught to the sound of the drums, but with grief on her face and without looking at the young men! If she looked at the young men we'd say she did not love her husband. If a brother's wife danced we should laugh at her and say she was no kinswoman of the dead man! But for a man it is different, he dances with his grief to enable his heart to bear it. In the old days, if there was a fight, the chief women mourners did not follow and call the war-cry, but the others; all the men went to fight but not all the women to watch.'

535 764 177 832 ●727 Our observation shows that there is just as much dancing at the burials of women as at those of men. Here too the dance, as now performed, combines the two functions: assuaging the fearful grief of some people and providing a sexual display in honour of the dead: 'We dance at her burial, for she too was a brave dancer (*mogi*).' But in the old days also there was dancing at women's burials: 'For a woman', one old man explained, 'bears us men, so that she too is a warrior.' 'In the past,' said another old man, 'we did dance at women's burials, only a little, not so much as at men's; we said that she was only a woman, but that none the less she also was concerned in war.'

The change in the quality of the burial dance is one of emphasis only; in the past also the sexual element was present: 'We danced so that the women should see our strength'—but it was not dominant. And the warlike quality which was then dominant has by no means disappeared; we heard of many spear-fights at burial dances. At one of them the chief, in order to prevent its continuance, made the dancers abandon the war-dance and finish the funeral with the ordinary dances of sexual display.

781 764 The emotional quality of mourning (*ukulila*) is different in

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

in war, for the victors were enriched with the cattle that went to redeem all captured wives or daughters. Nor were they taken as wives by the victors, although there is at least one well-known case where a woman was the sole objective of a war.

The dead might be buried where they fell, or brought home. The return of the host was awaited by the women in silence if the result of the fighting was not known to them. Each wife or mother recognized husband or son among the returning brave, but if one was told that her husband was coming on behind in another company, she knew that he was dead, and that his body was being brought home. If all returned in safety, and that sometimes happened in these far from desperate encounters, the women and girls set up their shrill cry, as exciting to an African as the pibroch to a Scot, and ran alongside, clapping and shouting in joy. The night was given up to feasting. The captured cattle were divided by the chief, lions' shares going to those who distinguished themselves in the fighting. The defeated chief, if he had any cattle left, also gave his men a feast, for they must not be allowed to lose heart over a single failure, and no doubt there was much boasting on both sides. If the sacred *lusero* with its medicines was taken from the enemy, it was put into the house in which the victorious chief kept his *ifingira*, the very powerful medicines by which his authority was (and is) upheld.

Cowards were held in supreme contempt. But a coward is not a man who runs away; all do that as the struggle sways to and fro; a coward is a man who

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

703 does not enter the battle at all, but hangs in the rear with the old men, afraid to take his part in the fight; or who fails to answer the rallying cry and help to turn the tide of battle. Tokens of contempt were heaped upon him. He got no share of the spoils. When the feast was going on, a piece of roasted flesh was handed to him on the burned end of a stick taken out of the fire; if he dropped it he was beaten, the final disgrace. In very bad cases, his house was pulled down and his wives given to other men. But one who was ordered by the chief to keep out of the battle was not disgraced in this way. He did what he was told.

•727 The spoils of war, which were practically always cattle, belonged to the chief. If a man captured ten head, the chief might give him back five or less according to favour or valour. From a headman he would take only one or two; and out of all that fell to him he gave rewards to those who had distinguished themselves in the fighting, but had not taken cattle. No prisoners were taken, and the seriously wounded were killed. To let them live was to increase the number of future enemies, and to gain a reputation for softness which did not make for security against attacks from other quarters. And yet there was a pleasant kindness too; a man who had a friend killed on the other side went freely to the enemy's country to mourn for him, and no one thought of molesting him. The frightful orgies of slaughter in which it would appear that some Bantu tribes indulge, are unknown in Konde warfare. The interminable death-

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

roll of the Great War was a terrifying revelation of the unyielding nature of the Europeans in a quarrel.

Individual chiefs had special methods of securing victory. Mwamakula's wife, when her husband marched out with his forces, sat on a live sheep as long as the fighting went on: so assuring good luck to her husband in taking cattle, and preventing them running away when taken. Another wife sat on a cooking pot, to keep the enemy in a state of security while the warriors were closing in on them. They would go about as usual, unaware of danger, cooking and eating, until the storm burst, and there was no hope of defence. His sister had a *lusero* similar to the one carried into battle; and one of his old men lay down on the path, each soldier stepping over him as he passed on. While the fight was being waged, this old man sat on his haunches and pulled himself forward in that position, the effect being to make the enemy run. The *lusero* was carried hereditarily by Mfwimi, and when he laid it down it moved forward of itself as the enemy retired.

In the north there was a great prophet, whose presence in the battle always assured the victory to his own side; but if he retired, even for a moment, the battle turned, and he was brought back, by force if necessary.

Two great wars still stand out in the minds of the people: the victorious march of the Angoni, and the slaving invasion of the so-called Arabs. Both these enemies brought with them methods of fighting unknown to the Konde, who fled before the Angoni,

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

726 manner to his own predecessors in his title. The territorial nobles, however, did not then pray to theirs, although they went to fight; tribal war was carried on under royal auspices alone. The Kyungu himself remained behind in his house praying for their success. Some of the nobles of Ngonde went with the expedition, carrying the magic war-tails of the Kyungu, his spear *Kamisa* and a magic horn.

721 —The territorial nobles of the hills, we were told, were not summoned to take part in tribal wars or punitive expeditions. And this fact is perhaps the clearest evidence of the relatively slight hold which Mbande had upon them. Nor, even in the plain, were the Kyungu's orders invariably obeyed without question. It is said that when Mujumbe appealed for help against the Bemba chief Kyepele (=Cepele) Kyungu Mwangonde at first ordered the chiefs of Ngana to go alone to the war, without Mwakasungula. For Mwakasungula was his only surviving adult son and he feared to lose him. But the chiefs of Ngana refused to start without Mwakasungula, who in the end went with them.

726 The same warning that preceded a civil war was given by the men of Ngonde in tribal warfare also. "When the Kyungu sent his people against strangers he always forbade any surprise attacks, let there be parley first and explanation; let them point out that they had no wish for war, that it was the others who had forced war on them by wantonly killing one of their men (or whatever the reason was). We never fought like the Ngoni, always we explained our case first, asking why, if the other side had any just cause for their actions, they had not refrained and come and talked it all over with us. And so it was in the war against Kyepele, we explained our case."

● 727 567 We have seen already that the booty of punitive expeditions was divided among the chiefs and nobles who had fought and the Kyungu, and so it was in tribal warfare also. War was an important source of revenue for Mbande, bringing in both cattle and slaves. The war against the Bemba Kyepele (=Cepele) is particularly remembered for the number of slaves which Mwakasungula and the other chiefs brought back from it. While discussing slavery with some men of Ngonde one of us remarked that there had been little or no slavery among the Nyakyusa. "Yes, indeed, that is so: there was a lot of slavery here in Ngonde and very little among the Nyakyusa, because here people were captured in war. From Kyepele, for instance, a great host of slaves was captured and every chief at that time had Bemba slaves.

"And it was the custom for every chief to take a certain proportion of the slaves he had captured and hand them over to the Kyungu." (Why?) "Because they thought that it was his prayers for success that had enabled them to fight so well, to rout the enemy and to capture slaves

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

and wealth." Once again we see how closely connected were the religious powers of the Kyungu with his wealth.

And the military authority of Mbande, like that of the lesser rulers, was correlated both as cause and as effect with the other factors of its general political status. The central power rested in part on its military functions: it was a tribal rallying point for defence against alien attacks, together with the hierarchy which depended upon it, it provided the necessary large-scale organization for military success, its religious powers were never more valued than in wartime, while victory brought wealth and prestige both to the Kyungu and his subordinates. But, as comparison with the Nyakyusa shows,[1] it was only the flow of wealth up and down the hierarchy, in combination with the religious functions of Mbande, that made this large-scale military organization possible.

(c) *WARFARE AND AUTONOMY.*

Now warfare is, at one and the same time, an example of order and of disorder in human society. By social order I mean the systematic overcoming of lesser autonomies within existing wider groups: the overcoming of individual autonomy within the family and the local community, the overcoming of family, local and other autonomies within the tribe or state, the overcoming of tribal and state autonomies within still wider groups. By social disorder I mean the temporary overcoming by a lesser autonomy of the forces of some existing wider group. Legal procedure is one of most obvious examples of order, crime is one of the most obvious examples of disorder.

But warfare falls between these two extremes. Seldom are lesser autonomies so completely overcome as they are within a group at war, never is the autonomy of that group more clearly dominant over the forces making for a wider order. And it is of fundamental importance for the understanding of any social field to see which groups within it have both sufficient unity and sufficient autonomy to engage in recurrent warfare with one another. The size of the groups which go to war is one of the marks by which we distinguish primitive from civilized societies —the smaller the warring groups the more primitive the society.

Now the recurrent civil wars of Ngonde in the middle period of its history show us that, beneath its hierarchical facade, it was a society of the same kind as that of the Nyakyusa across the Songwe; the centralized political organization was too weak permanently to overcome the local autonomies of village, *kaf* and chiefdom. It is true that the mercantile divinity of Mbande gave sufficient unity to Ngonde to enable it to fight as

[1] Vide infra p. 64.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

kinsman. Though some of the reasons for his subordination are to be found in modern conditions, it is clear that many of the factors have always operated.

Wars did not only occur between brothers; but when one chief defeated another who was more distantly related to him, he did not, apparently ever, reduce him to a minor position: He either took his cows and then left him alone, or killed him and set up a brother of his own as an independent though villiad chief, or else, more rarely, killed him, took over the country and directly incorporated it in his own. So that, apart from the subordination of a defeated brother and his heirs, political authority always stopped at the boundaries of each separate chiefdom.[1]

The traditionally independent chiefdoms to-day vary in numbers from 100 to about 3,000 adult men.

The coming of the German Administration in 1913 introduced a paramount political authority, for the first time, in the persons of European officials; while in 1926, a generation later, the British Administration created new Native Authorities under the District Officer and superior to the chiefs. The traditionally independent chiefs were grouped together in eleven court districts, in each district a "Native Court" was set up, consisting of the various chiefs and their great commoners, under the hereditary presidency of one of the chiefs, who thereby became senior to all the others in that court district. Salaries for chiefs have been introduced, and the senior chiefs receive far higher salaries than the others; while the meetings of each Court are always held in the territory of the senior chief (*umulifyale ophulumba*); and to it has now been transferred a great deal of the legal business which, before 1926, was transacted by each chief sitting with his own great commoners in his own chiefdom. The chiefs themselves were consulted in the selection of the Court Presidents, and those chosen were normally the chiefs with the greatest number of men in each particular court district.

In this account the term *senior chief* (*umulifyale ophulumba*) denotes the President of a Native Court, *chief* (*umulifyale*) means one of the traditionally independent chiefs, while *minor chief* (*umulifyale omunali*) means one of the subordinate chiefs, often with only 40-60 men under him.

The introduction of Courts and salaries has brought an entirely new element into the relationship between old and young chiefs (vide

[1] Among the Konde of Nyasaland, I am told, there was a paramount chief Kyungu, with a far-reaching political authority; but there was no such chief among the Nyakyusa.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

indicated (*vide supra*, p. 35). And, as we shall see later, he also suspected that his quarrels with the Kinga priests and with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom made him ill.

Chiefs, and even the 'divine king' himself, lived in fear of the legitimate anger of their people, more particularly of their village headmen and priests, believing that such anger would bring them sickness, and this belief gave headmen and priests a very strong hold over their lord. How it worked was illustrated by an incident at Lubaga.

Mwanjala II (78) remarked to Mwakilima (111): 'I sent to summon Mwasesi (a commoner priest) for the ritual tomorrow but he refused saying: "I shall not come." He is angry because he was not called to the ritual at your home, nor was he told formally when the Kinga came, or when Mwaipaja [G.W.] came.' Mwakilima (111) asked: 'Will you pay him?' [i.e. admit your mistake and offer him compensation]. Mwanjala replied that he would, and Mwakilima expressed disgust. One of the Kinga priests who was listening broke into the conversation: 'Ignore him if he refuses to come. If it were us we should leave him and celebrate without him, but you Nyakyusa are all witches, and you fear to ignore a man who refuses to come to a ritual saying that he will bewitch you. You are cowards, you are!'

At this Godfrey Wilson asked if there were no witchcraft in BuKinga. The Kinga priest replied: 'There is some, but if the chief gives orders to celebrate a ritual and someone refuses to come we ignore him, and celebrate without him. You Nyakyusa *pay* a man for doing wrong. A man refuses to come when he should and then you *pay* him! If you are afraid of witchcraft why not finish the ritual and send his portion of meat to him afterwards?'

Another priest objected: 'Then he would say it was too small a piece.'

The commoner priests then could control even the Lwembe (for Mwanjala II acted in the place of the Lwembe though he was not installed), but at the same time the mystical power of the Lwembe was feared both by ordinary chiefs and commoners. Mwaijonga (82), who ruled before the European occupation, insulted and fought Mwakisisya the Lwembe (56), and killed some of his men, because 'Lwembe had spoiled the year', but he sent back the cattle that were seized.

In the old days it did not matter killing the Lwembe's men (in war), but no one dared to take his cattle, they feared lest he would spoil the year and send too much rain, and a plague of ulcers, and cause the cattle to